4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
EG1 Albania EG1

their young wives in charge of their parents. For with the Skipetars, as with the majority of Oriental peoples, patriarchal customs still survive, and all the sons bring home their brides to the paternal roof, there to remain in subjection to the parents-in-law until they shall themselves be heads of families.

The highest aspiration of an Albanian wife is to be the mother of boys, and she is less proud of her own beauty and the rank of her family than of the number of her sons and of their valour. The mother of many sons is sure of the lasting affection of her husband, enjoys the respect and consideration of the rest of his family, and wields great authority in the household to which she has come as a stranger. As they never permanently leave the paternal roof, she may look forward to their support and affection in her old age, and to see their children growing up around her. When her husband leaves his home for a sojourn at a distance, custom requires that she should manifest no grief at his departure. Instead of accompanying him to the threshold, and watching his familiar figure disappear in the distance, or going to meet him on his arrival, she hides herself at both the moment of his arrival and of his departure. A woman's tears or joy, they say, must not soften a man's heart when his duty lies before him. Neither must they ask for news of them at any time during their absence. Yet in the depth of their hearts no wives more regret the absence of their husbands, as the touching little superstitious observances with which they console themselves testify. Unknown to their partners, they sew in their clothes

4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
EG1 Albania EG1

A horrible belief prevails among the Ghegs that when men or women live to be a hundred years old their breath becomes poisonous and kills healthy people. Von Hahn says that old people suspected of causing sickness in this way, especially when an epidemic is raging, have atoned for their longevity with a fiery death at the hands of their panic-stricken neighbours.[1]

A curious notion is also shared by Greeks and Albanians that shadows are capable of assuming an independent existence, and, being malevolently disposed, are able to deal men blows which usually cause their death.

The Dif, or Dev (δίφι, δίβι, δεφ, δέβι), is, like the Kurdish supernal of the latter name,[2] a being possessed of extraordinary physical strength. "He is a regular Dif" is said of a remarkably strong man, as we say, "He is another Samson." According to the people of Elbassan, the Dif is an enormous giant who lives underground and never comes to the surface, and whose business it is to keep the cauldrons boiling which supply the hot and medicinal springs in the neighbourhood of that town. These springs, in common with those found in other parts of the country, are much resorted to for curative purposes. Their waters are, however, drunk indiscriminately for all kinds of ailments, without regard to their various medicinal properties. The cures effected not being attributed to the water itself so much as to the influence of the magical beings who have their abodes in the springs and wells, people consequently go

[1] *Albanesische Studien*, p. 163.

[2] See p. 155. Von Hahn suggests an Indian origin for this word, which, he says, he had found in no other part of Turkey. *Op. cit.* p. 162.

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGI Albania EGI

CHAPTER V

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

592 Some co-ordinating authority is obviously necessary when many workers, most of them occupied with different duties, live under the same roof. The Unwritten Law therefore requires that in each family there shall be a patriarchal system of government, with one man master of the house and everybody else subordinate to him.

When there was only one man in a house, he became automatically its unquestioned master. If he died while his children were small, his brother or, much less often, his wife's brother saw to the family until the eldest boy grew old enough to take charge as master. When there were two or more men in a household, the master was elected, not born, to his position. Most frequently he was chosen in early youth by his predecessor, but should the latter die prematurely, he was elected at a general meeting of the men of the household. The women were not invited to this meeting nor were their views ascertained. The former method was preferred because it enabled the future master to be trained by his predecessor with incessant talk about the matters that would fall within his competence—relations with the authorities, relations with neighbours, household management, laws on roads, field boundaries, pasturage rights and so on. If he had to be elected by the household, he must rely on his own good sense and experience, supplemented by consultations with his subordinates or neighbours. Since its publication in 1933 Father Gjeçov's book on Lek's Kanùn has become available for reference, but previously heads of households had only the unwritten laws for guidance.

When a new master was being chosen, primogeniture was one of
• [88] the factors taken into consideration. Albanians regarded their elders with deference and, consequently, obeyed them more willingly. A very young master, however, such as might emerge from exclusive reliance on the accident of birth, could be a misfortune for his family.

Primogeniture, however, counted for nothing compared to administrative qualities such as knowledge of the law, shrewd judgement, even temper and fair-mindedness. A reigning master

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

it was the offender's birthright to remain in the house, to eat at the common table, and to have his wife and children maintained out of the family purse. A striking illustration of this weakness of the communal system was to be seen in Shalë in the 1930's, when Mirash Nue's family included his wife, his elder son Pal, Pal's wife and four children, and his younger son Gjon. Since he, Mirash, was too old to work and Pal was a wastrel, Gjon alone ploughed to feed the household and fetched firewood to keep it warm. To get money for government taxes and his father's coffee and cigarettes, he worked for the priest in his spare time. He had been unable to earn enough to pay for a bride and at thirty years of age was still unmarried, a calamity in primitive Albanian eyes. Pal, not criminal, just lazy and selfish, and saved from beating by his father's advanced years and his own age, paid no attention to either his father's upbraidings or the barely concealed contempt of the neighbours and turned up unfailingly for the meals he had done nothing to provide.

The master received no money payments for his services but enjoyed certain privileges. His clothes were often newer and of better cloth than those of his subordinates; more silver chains crossed his breast, and more silver rings glittered on his fingers. He was entitled to have his own bedding and coffee utensils and to keep them until he died. If he chose to buy himself a riding horse, a watch, or arms richly inlaid with silver and bright stones, he might do so. His subordinates, though left to walk while he rode, to learn the time from the sun by day and from the crowing of a cock at night, and to content themselves with the plainest of rifles and revolvers, did not seem to resent his magnificence. He represented the family, and the worthier he appeared in externals as well as in mind and character, the greater the glory reflected on each of them.

Indoors the master sat in the place of honour in the sitting-room, the right-hand chimney corner as one looked from the fireplace towards the door. Though marked deference was usually shown to old people, he never gave up this place to his aged father or elder brother except in the districts of Shpat, Çermenikë and Shalë, where age took precedence over social position. The other men grouped themselves cross-legged in front of the fire, the future master facing it squarely, older men flanking him, and younger men sitting behind him. The youngest of all, who had to do such work as shutting the door, bringing firewood, and carrying in supper, sat next to the door; he was described as the serving man. When

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

CHAPTER XII

ELDERS

[671] It is impossible to understand the laws and customs of the Albanian
622 mountains without a knowledge of the varieties and responsibilities of the elders. A man could be an elder not only in the literal sense but as a legal personage. Seven types developed in sequence one from another among the southern tribes.

888 Everywhere the word for 'elder' is (sing.) *plak* (plur. *pleq*), which is pure Albanian and means literally 'old man'. There is a corresponding feminine (sing.) *plaka*, 'old woman'. In households of any size there might be several men and women who were really old in years and were 'elders' in the literal sense. These were the first type. The majority were ordinary people and had no legal importance.

592 The idea of age disappears with the second type, found in every household irrespective of its size. Here there were always one man and one woman who bore the special title of 'old man (or elder) of the house' and 'old woman (or elder) of the house'. These under their more usual Albanian titles of master of the household and mistress of the household were not necessarily elders in the sense of 'older people'. They might have attained their position when under forty and have found themselves in authority at that comparatively early age over older men and women.

63 The third category of elders appeared as soon as a household
596 split up and each brother or male cousin in it acquired his own house. Then, a 'brotherhood' (*vllazni*) was formed. In this community each new house was as much a separate entity as the parent one, and was no longer under the control of the master and mistress, the 'elders' of the old joint home. It had its own 'elders' of both sexes who managed all its affairs, external and internal. The 'old man' of the joint home, now administering a much smaller household, thus lost a proportionate share of his importance. But the new masters also lost some of theirs. So long as the family lived together any competent adult among them might deputise for the master in village or tribal affairs or in the administration of the communal home, but from the day they separated,

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

The man killed in the murderer's stead must not be too old, feeble-minded, or physically frail to carry arms, for such men were counted women, and women could not be killed in blood feuds. If the avenger killed such a man, he lost caste, was publicly branded as 'low-class' and made it certain that the feud would not be closed. It was also illegal to kill boys who were still too young to carry arms, that is to say, under fifteen or in some cases twenty. In the Malësi e Madhe, however, it was held that one must take vengeance where one could, and that in default of an adult enemy one might kill a boy. Even in that region such a crime was not committed except by a very bad man or one who was frenzied with rage at the recent murder of a relative or otherwise. For instance, in 1933 a subaltern of the Alije family, whose wife had been carried off by another Dibran, refrained for some years from avenging the insult in the way demanded by mountain law. Taunted with this restraint at a chance meeting in a café, he put aside the civilization acquired during his military education in Albania and in Italy and rushed for his revolver. As he was unable to find the man who had taunted him, he lay in wait for the latter's schoolboy son, aged fourteen, and shot him dead.

The men of Shalë said that vengeance on a boy was commoner in Pult than in their own tribe; the men of Pult, they added contemptuously, were in every way their inferiors. Much the same was said by the tribesmen of Lurë of their neighbours in Mirditë and Kthellë, who returned the compliment in kind. In Lumë a man who took such vengeance was never again given the greeting 'Peace be with thee', which is every good Mohammedan's due from his fellows. The manner of such vengeance was inevitably very brutal. Thus two men from Shlak, when working in Bardhanjol, found the small son of their enemy and tore him in two; they are said not to have troubled to kill him first. More often the enemy wrenched the cradle off a woman's back and in her presence cut the infant's throat. A particularly nasty case was reported about 1932 from Shalë, one of the most backward regions of Albania. While two families were quarrelling about a piece of land, the wife of Grimës one day voiced her opinions so volubly in Gjelosh's house that he lost his temper and pushed her out. She fell down some steps by the door and bruised her hip. She showed the bruise to the gendarmerie, who were sympathetic enough to arrest Gjelosh and to imprison him for three months. The woman, who cared more

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If expiation took the form of blood money, no distinction was made for age; the payment for a worn-out man of eighty or an able-bodied man of thirty was the same as for a boy of five or an infant of a few weeks. As when a life was taken for a life, no distinction was made for social standing or moral character; the payment for a bajraktar was the same as for a labourer. A female's 'blood', however, cost only half a male's. In the early days when these payments were determined, money was so distributed that the rich had a great deal, while the poor, who formed the bulk of the population, were all but penniless. The fear of having to pay a large sum in blood money was therefore a considerable deterrent against murder.

Blood money was accepted only in Mirditë and north Albania. Elsewhere it was scorned. 'Blood money and bride-price do you no good', said Lumë. 'We don't sell blood for money; that is a low thing to do', said Çermenikë, a boast repeated in Dibër in even stronger terms. In Labinot and Godolesh blood could not be washed away with money on the north Albanian system. In all these districts the formula after a murder was 'either pardon or kill'.

It must be admitted that neither lived up to its pretensions, the north being more truculent and the other districts less truculent than they claimed. In the Malësi e Madhe, for instance, only weak, low-class families would accept blood money; if other families did so, they were held to have 'disgraced themselves'. Indeed, a bajraktar's household, a voivode's or a 'leading family' should seek for fifty years, if need be, to kill the murderer of one of their men. On the other hand, a Çermenikë man sometimes accepted blood money, but if he so demeaned himself, his aim was to ruin his enemy and he fixed the price accordingly. In Dibër no man would accept blood money for a male relative unless it was accompanied by the present of a rifle as a conventional sign that he was still free to kill the murderer if he could. In Lumë a subtle use was sometimes made of blood money. Normally, when a life had been paid for a life, peace was made. But when an inferior killed his superior, the latter's relative would not make peace till he had killed two of the other's men. At the peace-making the first was paired with the original victim and for the second the superior's relative paid blood money.

Given the stigma attached to blood money, it was seldom paid except in lighter cases. After an accidental murder, for instance,